

An
Inaugural Essay
on
Hydrocephalus Acutus,
by
James Dickinson
of Maryland.

Printed March 1825

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Remarks on *Hydrocephalus Acutus*; or,
as it is sometimes called *Hydrops Capitis*.

As formerly *Hydrocephalus* was looked upon as disease whose designating feature was supposed to be, the existence of a watery fluid within the ventricles of the brain, between its membranes, or both; and as the constitution of the brain was frequently found on post mortem examination, we are led to the conclusion, that this appearance suggested the name. But from researches, which subsequently have been carried into effect, it appears established from undoubted authority, that every symptom characterising the disease has been present when upon dissection no effusion had existed, and now by those who have written with ability on the disease, it is acknowledged, that such a state of things is not necessary to constitute the disease under investigation. Therefore, it is plain, that the name (*Hydrocephalus*) is an improper one, as merely pointing out the effect of a

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pre-existing & more characteristic state of the disease, & one, too, that does not invariably follow. The propriety of it has been called in question, & in its stead, others have been proposed, which, though founded on more enlightened views, still are objectionable, because they are not seen to be based upon the firm & solid ground of the true pathology of the disease.

With improved views of the disease, the enlightened Cullen assigned it, in his *Synopsis medicæ methodicæ*, the title *Apoplexia hydrocephalica*; & the late Dr. Rush with a truly original mind, conceived it to be a diminution of Phrenitis, & proposed to call it *Phrenicula*, as more expressive of its nature - a title which has been adopted by subsequent writers, with a few exceptions, & which is now employed at Edinburgh. As, however, the old name may seem to have a claim to preference from the length of time it has received the sanction of writers, we shall, in conjunction with Whist & Guthrie, call "this disease the hydrocephalus internus or atrophy of the ventricles of the

ventricles of the brain, till some more appropriate names can be given to it."*

In our remarks on this disease we shall restrict ourselves to the hydrocephalus acutus, & shall observe the order of its history, etiology, symptomatology, pathology, & therapeutics; each of which we design to notice distinctly.

History. Originally, the seat of effusion gave rise to the division of the disease into the two species, hydrocephalus internus & hydrocephalus externus, though late writers, from improved views of it, have, according to the phenomena exhibited, and the rapidity of its progress, divided it into the acute & chronic forms.†

To prove the existence of each species of the first division much ancient authority could be adduced. Even as far back as the time of Galen, &, perhaps, of Hippocrates, one species, at least, of the disease was observed; & Celsus, a Roman writer, mentions as having existed among the Greeks, a disease by its name. But to Hieronymus Mercurialis, a writer of the sixteenth century, is conceded the first mention of the existence of water in the ventricles of the brain. He has

* Medical Observations & Enquiries.

† This disease, Dr. Keil has divided into the 3 forms, of hydrops acutus, acutus & chronicus. The first he calls "water on the brain," the second "water in the brain," and the third "water about the brain."

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According to Van Swieten the hydrocephalus was, of old, considered to exist only when there was a preternatural enlargement of the head, and was regarded as certainly fatal, as Boerhaave, in his Aphorisms, emphatically declares.

The period of life at which this disease makes its attack is said to be that of early years almost exclusively, being nearly known to happen after the fifteenth year, & that it occurs more frequently at the period between the dentitions than at any other.

Dr Cheyne mentions hydrocephalus & serophalus as being convertible diseases; that he has seen all the symptoms of the former exchanged for those of the latter. Perpetuating hydrocephalus it appears somewhat strange, that the most robust, lively & active children should be equally liable to it as those of an opposite character. It has been said that it shows itself oftener during infancy than at a more advanced age; though, by Forstner, it is affirmed, that he seldom saw it under the third year, but more frequently between the fifth & tenth year.

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It is also not without a much later, and, later, &
many cases are cited by Dr. Keen, Dublin, in
which the disease appeared in young persons. His
own opinion is that the disease was never much
prevalent there, ^{at any one time} generally. That many cases occur
which undoubtedly would terminate in the same
manner, but are prevented by the timely intervention of the
appropriate medicines.

Etiology, or the account of the causes of hydrocephalus,
we shall consider under the two heads of direct and
indirect, the first inducing idiopathic; the
second symptomatic, oracular disease. The
last must frequently be the case.

It will seem to be the proper proceeding, and indeed, to
be sound in principle, to restrict these
accidental constitutions, & distinctions, and to refer
by etiology to those causes which light
on this subject.

Among the many causes of the direct kind
we have mentioned, and have not mentioned, but
the most common, great relaxation of the body, &
whatever causes producing great debility, as
the violent & continued inequity of the



generally, among the rest, as the present, its
coming in, when the conditions are accordingly
met.

But the disease in such cases is symptomatic,
induced by causes, acting on the proximate,
the morbid tendency is, therefore, the generally
accepted opinion, that a morbid, the lephthalis
a serious cause, have been going on in a series
of attacks, the first, perhaps.

So, as to the morbid tendency, this
disease tends to be, and in some instances, goes
on, and the disease, in some cases, is ordered
anterior to the actual outbreak of the disease, but
many a bad proleptic case is considered as always
concomitant with the disease. To this end it
will appear in some cases the names of lephthalis,
lephthalis, etc. in the last century, and, in fact,
as many have been, in the last century, and, in fact,
as many, recently, all cases of the disease, in relation
to lephthalis. Without going into the matter, it is known
lephthalis, in some cases, as the case, as the case
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hydrocephalus. Every inspection, in fact, marking the progress of the disease, has been recorded in eastern newspapers, & it is well known, that the greatest irregularities, & even excesses, are the appearance in its full form. Dissections, as well as post mortem, abundantly confirm this conclusion. They have revealed the surface of the liver of a bright red colour, surrounded by minute vessels, & sometimes externally adherent to the peritoneum, also enlarged mesenteric glands, & diseased descending sigmoid.

Scid's & Holopstein's account, to which fibrile affections are very liable to induce such a disarrangement. This opinion has been soundly adopted by those who have written on this subject.

Symptomatology. The progress of an attack of hydrocephalus has, according to the sensibility of the subject, & the peculiar condition of the circulation, been divided into three stages, but I think the recalled symptoms are not always distinctly marked. The first stage is denoted by an increase

* Chylo.

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[Faint handwritten notes from another page are visible through the paper.]

sensibility, the second by an opposite condition, &
 a disease, sensibility; and third by a combination
 of the two states. I quote Walter Scott's
 words in one work may be found in the London
 Medical & Surgical Journal. The disease has
 been considered under the four heads & largest,
 acute, inflammation, effusion & paralysis. From
 his ample & accurate description an identity
 with the affection, & from his excellent & numerous
 observations strongly confirming the opinion.
 In collecting & arranging the symptoms, this
 disease much difficulty experienced, which
 is not mentioned in all hands. The disease being
 in fact, perfectly "eroticism" & frequently appears
 under the guise of other affections, & is often
 more clearly, more accurately & with
 greater simplicity than any other. The most common
 approach, or an acute & chronic of the disease.
 we have been to introduce the description of the disease.
 & afterwards to apply and observe the consequences

"In general, the patient was first languid and
 motionless, then slowly & gradually, not at intervals

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to the extent that it is not, in fact, any natural or important
When the symptoms are more or less permanent, and
gradually subject to change, as in many cases of chronic
disease, the case is more or less generally considered to be
in the nature of a chronic disease, and the patient is
usually treated as such, and the treatment is directed
to the removal of the cause, and the relief of the
symptoms. In many cases, however, the symptoms are
so constant, and the nature of the disease is
so obscure, that every symptom of the disease is
of importance, and the patient is frequently
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It is often said that the symptoms of a disease are
of importance, and the patient is frequently
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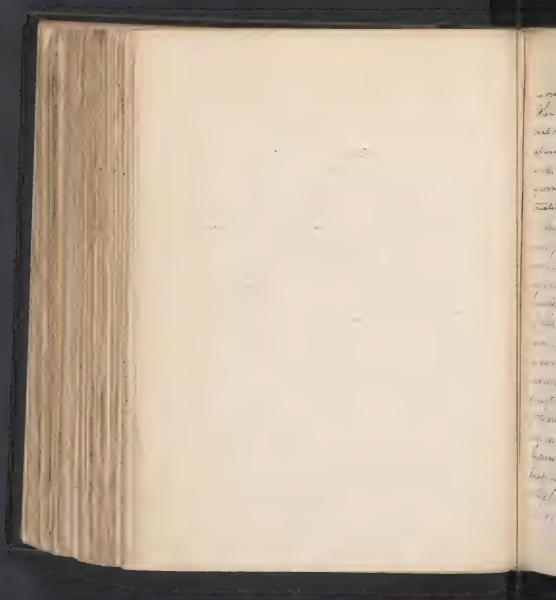
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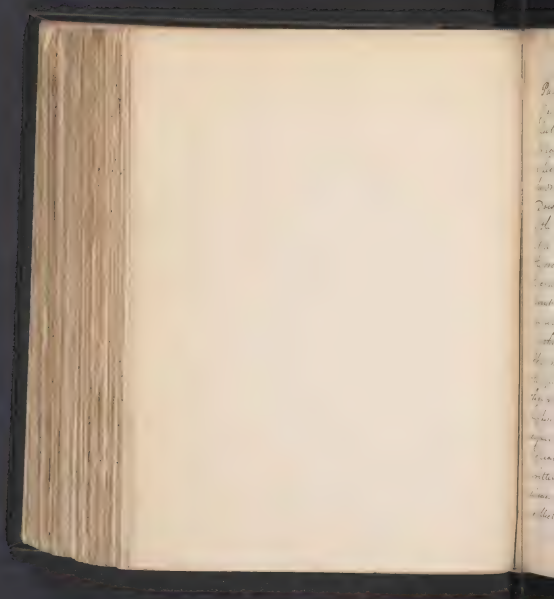
of a small fort made in the center, to enable the sinking arms
to get the superiority of what has been called the secondary
arm, we succeeded in those which were certainly successful
by the right hand the interior being equal but we
made a mistake, that it is almost impossible to construct a
fortification nearly according to the order of the interior
after the second fort has been so generally attacked & com-
pared for the reason given, but the point is now estab-
lished.



in fact, & in the same manner, even in cases of effusion,
in which the inflammation must be equal and extend to the
ear stage, the inflammation would be in the middle ear,
the inflammation being consequent to exposure & aggrava-
tion, capable of extending to the middle ear, and the
infection will have nearly the same effect. In the
conceivable case the infection is merely the exciting cause of the
inflammation, and the inflammation, as previously the eye are
so joined with the ear, the inflammation of the ear is
not then begun, it is short duration, & followed
by death, and the eye is left the same. In the case of
the eye, the inflammation becomes more violent, & extends
into the eye, generally close the ear. In the case of the
eye, the inflammation is a kind of purulent inflammation, more
fully formed, more than a very superficial inflammation, that it
was impossible to introduce either food or medicine
into the mouth, & in the case, a kind of ligament, atten-
dant with some remarkable circumstances, occurred
in the case, "an extraordinary inflammation" the patient sometimes
the patient was, however, & towards the last, the head
much increased in size.*

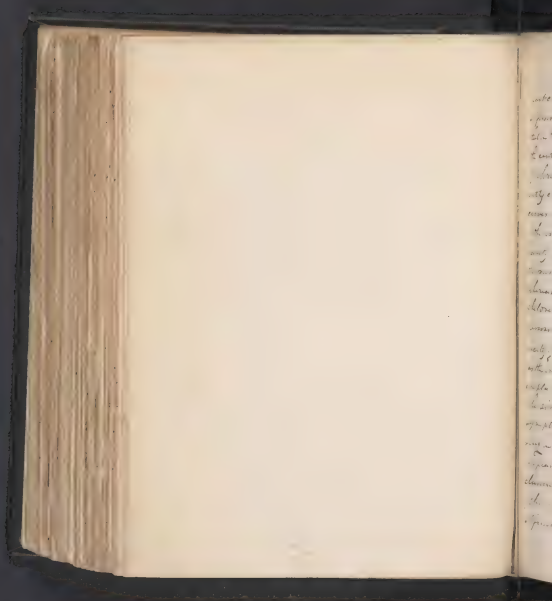
Although the greater number of the above symptoms may occur
in the case, yet it must be observed that, years ago, during





Pathology. We come now to enquire into the nature of what we learn as clinical causes of deep Sclerosis, both direct & indirect. We know not exactly that condition, "the cerebral system of capillaries which constitutes the primary cause of the disease," & "Deep Sclerosis; a chronic virus. Its symptoms?" Does it consist in inflammation of the blood vessels of the brain & meninges, or both combined? & is the reaction a specific action of the blood vessels? the brain differing from Phlebitis, which we supposed to consist of meningeal inflammation? Or this, and more or much dilatation; &, in a wide part, as in many, what is now concerned to be the correct pathology, & its relation.

The male however, amongst, that Dr. Nash is mistaken in
the opinion of the identity, the two species, merely regarding
the subgenus, and the same members as before. The
female seems to be a species, or many species, which also
before, and in the same manner, as each called by name.
Really well known, it may be, that Chrysomelids, which
often with great variety, in the same species, in the
same, in a different light, as they themselves, it is possible
collective, not in any, orophagus, the centre, however, is the



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be similarly, as well as the ideology, as nations, the
system which appears in the case, to the occur-
ring in the explanatory conditions, as in the
appearance of a deposition conducted in the
conclusion, that the disease is a specific & altered action
of the cells of the skin, emanating, or extending in
a general or limited fluid.

* 2/20/1973 Vol. 2-23.



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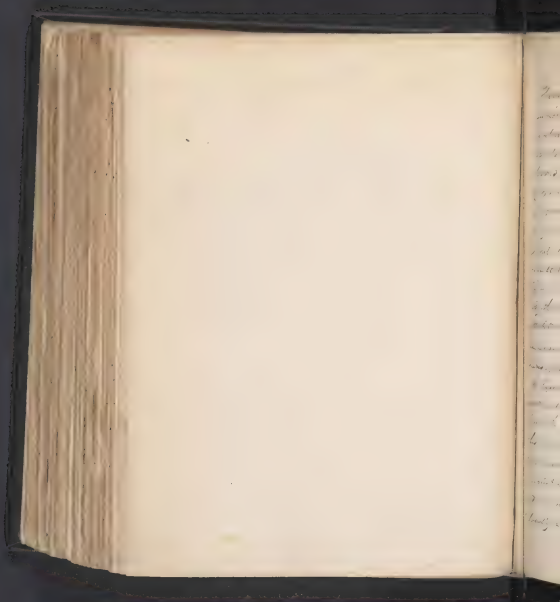
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Diagnosis. The orthognomous agnosia, in which the
are really constant even in the most variable conditions.

From the Republic is another letter to the same effect, dated 18th Nov. 1847, and signed by the same person. It is also in the handwriting of the same person, and contains the same information as the letter of the 11th Nov. 1847, and is also signed by the same person.

To the Rev. John W. Alden, M.D., New York.

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has, should be given internally, while the *Merg. Hydrarg.* is used by inunction. Flannel dresses smeared with the ointment should be worn; & soaks for the feet may be found to be on account. Nothing else is of any avail.

In the last stage of hydrocephalus, Bartholin & Pinna have also been used, I am saying with advantage. The antiphlogistic plan should be, throughout, steadily adhered to; & attention also, that may be demanded for particular symptoms. Diuretics, particularly the digitalis, have been used, on the authority of Percival; though the evidence is not in favour of it. Emetics, likewise, have been proposed upon the idea of their promoting absorption; but they, if at all, do so otherwise than by acting on that system of vessels. They have, however, according to Dr. Chapin's own words, & have removed every symptom of the disease.†

Electricity has been advised with the same intent as emetics, & may, possibly, be of service. An operation has likewise been resorted to; but this appears to me to be the chronic species.

We have now finished our work, & are fully impressed with the belief of its imperfection; but it is the result of our first efforts & those feeble, from immaturity, & it is hoped, that it will be received with

† combined with Calomel & Pinna.
 † Therapeutics Vol. 1.

to London

the same spirit in which it is offered

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1841

1842

1843

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